

THE
DIAN
FOSSEY

Gorilla Journal

November 2018

Daily Protection | Scientific Research | Educating Conservationists | Helping Communities

Inside

Program news 2

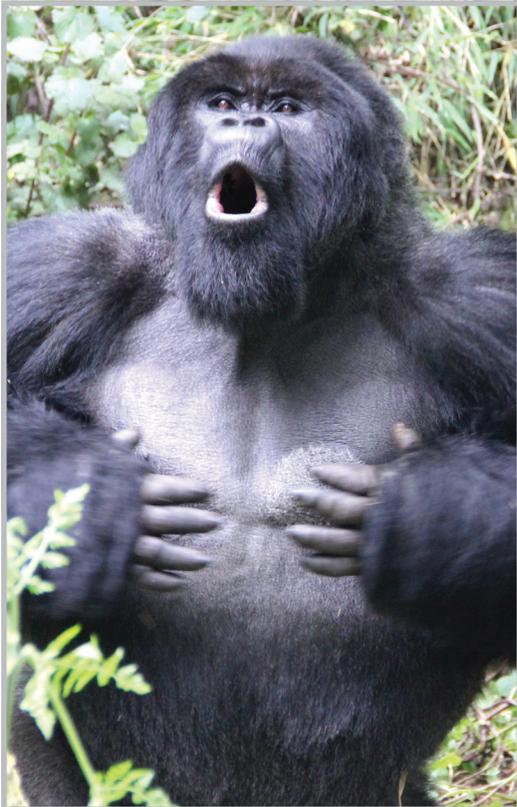
New gorilla group
found in Congo 3

Life with Pablo gorillas:
Episode two 4

Why adopt a gorilla 6

A year of critical milestones

Celebrating another increase in the Virunga mountain gorilla population, designing our new campus in Rwanda, and finding more Grauer's gorillas in Congo!



By Tara Stoinski, Ph.D.

President and CEO/Chief Scientific Officer

Sept. 24 marked the second annual World Gorilla Day, with gorilla conservation activities held around the world. This great event began last year, to honor the 50th anniversary of the founding of our Karisoke Research Center by Dian Fossey.

And I'm happy to report that we had an amazing 51st year. We started the year with the incredible announcement of the lead gift by Ellen DeGeneres for our new gorilla campus in Rwanda. Then we learned that the results of the latest mountain gorilla census showed another strong increase in their population. And we found more Grauer's gorillas to protect in Congo as well.

We also made substantial strides in our education and community programs, and have put in place new strategies to expand these people programs and to monitor our impact. We feel that a people-centered approach is the most successful path to effective conservation, and our programs are showing that local people are truly the greatest hope for the future of wildlife.

None of this would be possible without the support of our donors around the world. This year we were especially honored to be the recipients of several estate gifts, in which generous and thoughtful donors planned ahead to help secure our financial future. Their legacy gifts will make an ongoing and critical difference to gorilla conservation and our associated programs.

Many thanks to everyone who helped make this an incredible year for gorillas! ■

Sign up!

Free monthly
Gorilla eNews
gorillafund.org/enews



**THE DIAN FOSSEY
GORILLA FUND
INTERNATIONAL**

The Gorilla Journal is a publication of the Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund® International, 800 Cherokee Ave., SE, Atlanta, GA 30315-1440, 1-800-851-0203.

©2018 Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund® International. gorillafund.org. All rights reserved. No information from this publication may be used without written permission from the Fossey Fund.



Program news: New trackers, interns, science studies and community work

From new scientific studies to new successes in our people programs, there is always something special going on in each area of the Fossey Fund's work.

Our four basic program areas always have exciting progress and news, including these latest tidbits:

Gorilla protection

One of our newest gorilla trackers in Rwanda is Obadia Tuyishimwe, who has a diploma in wildlife management from a local college. He has been assigned to record behavioral data in the gorilla group led by silverback Mafunzo.

Obadia says he has already had incredible experiences with the gorillas, including recently seeing a newborn infant.

"It was my first time seeing a gorilla with a newborn," he reports. "It was the nicest thing I've ever seen in my life — the way the mom holds the baby is so wonderful to see. And the way gorillas hug and kiss their little ones as we do is incredible! I want the world to understand we must protect and conserve these amazing animals."



Obadia Tuyishimwe, left, is one of our newest trackers in Rwanda. Pierre Musay is our latest intern tracking gorillas in Congo.



Educating conservationists

Our second Congolese field intern at our Nkuba Conservation Area joined our field staff in gorilla tracking this summer.

Pierre Ngomakasa Musay is a student in Bukavu ISP university, finalizing his studies in biology/chemistry. He met our program director Urbain Ngobobo and our Congo research director Dr. Damien Cailaud, while the latter were presenting classes at the university.

After initial concerns about security in the region, Pierre says he found a community that was inspired by being involved in conservation and an immense primary forest that still shelters an incredible amount of biodiversity.

He spent two weeks with our Grauer's trackers in the forest. "They love their work and the Fossey Fund," he says, and are happy to be able to protect Grauer's gorillas. "The forest of Nkuba and the Fossey Fund's research base here offers an unequalled opportunity for students and researchers," he adds, saying that he hopes this work will help save the forest and improve the lives of local people as well.

See **Programs**, page 8

Science

Our scientific activities are growing by leaps and bounds, not just in number but in diversity of subjects.

For example, we're involved in a new collaborative investigation on infant development in gorillas and chimpanzees, and how they transition from mother's milk to a solid-food diet. This is funded by a grant from the National Science Foundation and brings together researchers from the George Washington University, the Max Planck Institute of Evolutionary Anthropology, Franklin and Marshall College, and the Fossey Fund.

We also have several other studies just published that have garnered a lot of interest, all based on observations done at Karisoke and involving many of our scientists. One of them, led by former Karisoke researcher Dr. Melanie Mirville, now of the

University of Western Australia, indicates that gorilla behavior among males is heavily influenced by life-long social bonds, not just by competition for females or for food sources.

Another study, led by former Karisoke researcher Dr. Cyril Grueter, now also of Western Australia, shows that gorillas seek out food plants that are salty, and this plays a role in where they decide to forage. This is important because their search for sodium-rich foods can take them to more risky areas.

And a third study, led by former Karisoke researcher Dr. Stacy Rosenbaum, now with Northwestern University, suggests that silverbacks who do more grooming and resting in contact with infants actually sire more infants. So being a nice to kids seems to pay off!



One of our newest studies is looking at aspects of infant gorilla development.

Finding and tracking

Large Grauer's group found in Congo

Grauer's gorillas are among the world's 25 most-endangered primates and are found only in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Most of them live outside of protected areas, and the Fossey Fund now has five teams of local trackers working in community-managed forests to protect them.

Our Grauer's tracking is conducted from a base camp in the village of Nkuba, but our trackers must hike for two weeks at a time in the forest to reach the remote locations where the gorillas range. Currently, our operations allow us to cover an area of about 1,200 square kilometers.

We locate gorilla groups initially by conducting transect surveys, when we go to new areas of the forest to look for gorillas and other important wildlife. If such signs are found, we try to confirm the size of the gorilla group, study and address potential threats to their safety, then set up regular protection.

Late last year, in the far eastern sector of the area where we work — called Mudiedie — our transect patrol found evidence of a large gorilla group, locating more than 25 gorilla night nests. After several attempts to confirm this finding, as well as reporting a known poacher in the area, our team began tracking the group. Now we provide close protection for these gorillas every day.

Unlike the mountain gorilla groups we follow in Rwanda, the Grauer's groups are not habituated to the presence of humans, so our trackers follow their trails one day behind. This is the best choice for preserving the safety of these gorillas.

This summer, our field staff



Our Grauer's gorilla trackers in Congo located a large group of gorillas while surveying a new area. Now we are providing close protection for them every day. Here, from left, trackers Wasso, Patrick and Nabila, with researcher Neetha. Below, aerial view of our Mudiedie forest camp.



hosted an experienced film crew to help document our work here, and the first-ever video of some of these gorillas was obtained, from a distance.

Producer/director Steve Greenwood had this to say upon completing the filming: "I have spent much of my career filming conservation projects around the world. However I have never seen a project as inspiring as yours in Nkuba. I am in awe of the dedication of your whole team out there. I think their work is a great model for both development and conservation. It also means a much brighter future for the Grauer's gorillas." (*Stay tuned to our website* — gorillafund.org

— for more information on this documentary.)

Community conservation is working

Our work in these otherwise unprotected forests is made possible in cooperation with traditional customary chiefs and landowners, who agree to have conservation activities on their land.

This core of Grauer's gorilla range — between Kahuzi-Biega and Maiko national parks — has been subject to decades of hunting, mining and other dangers to wildlife, leading to dramatic declines in the numbers of Grauer's gorillas and

See **Grauer's group**, page 8

Respecting rules

Male hierarchy and a gorilla group's success

This is the second in a series of articles chronicling the lives of the gorillas in a legendary mountain gorilla group named after former silverback Pablo, in honor of the group's 25th anniversary. Pablo formed the group in 1993, but was its leader for only one year, before yielding dominance to silverback Cantsbee, who would reign for the next 20+ years.

Mountain gorillas live in groups that are led by a dominant silverback (adult male), who must lead the group's daily travels and activities, keep the group cohesive, and defend the group from outside intruders.

He usually also has the best access to the females for mating. Cantsbee was so successful at this that he oversaw the group's growth to a record 65 members, sired more offspring than any other male we've documented, and held the longest reign of power of any other silverback.

Cantsbee was a very impressive and successful leader and was able to maintain dominance and respect throughout most of his adult life. Our observers described him as strong but gentle, charismatic and authoritative. His clear leadership meant he was strongly respected by all members of the group, providing a clear sense of hierarchy. And respecting the hierarchy is the first and most important rule in keeping a gorilla group cohesive.

So in this episode, we are focusing on male hierarchy, since it is the most critical factor in group life.

But hierarchy exists in both males and females, becoming relevant when gorillas reach sexual maturity, around age 8.

"Hierarchy among the silverbacks is so important that when there is more than one silverback there is literally a number one, number two,



number three and so forth," says Veronica Vecellio, the Fossey Fund's gorilla program senior advisor. And Pablo's group is a prime example of this, with its four silverbacks and three slightly younger blackbacks all involved.

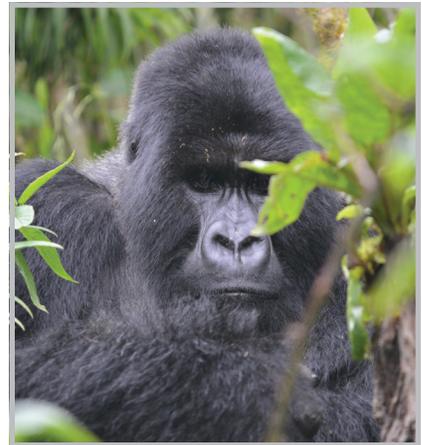
Hierarchy dictates a variety of behavioral rules within the group, such as: deciding where the group will go; access to feeding spots; who can walk in front of whom; and male access to females for mating and for proximity during rest periods.

Hierarchy also becomes evident during interactions with other groups, where males have to show

their alliances with each other while facing an opponent.

Gicurasi is current number one

Cantsbee left his mark on the group in so many ways, not least of which was helping to raise son Gicurasi, who now leads the group. Gicurasi's mother left the group when he was still quite young, and Cantsbee helped watch over his young son. But even before Cantsbee's death in 2017, Gicurasi began testing out the possibilities of leadership, challenging his elderly father more and more



Gicurasi, left, at 23 years old, is in his prime and is the dominant silverback in the group, following the death of the long-reigning Cantsbee. Dushishoze, above, at 15 years old, is the current number two in the group

often, eventually taking over.

One time, while the group was resting in 2015, Gicurasi approached Cantsbee and another silverback who was nearby. These two loudly grunted at Gicurasi but he did not stop approaching, and Cantsbee then stepped back to make room for Gicurasi to pass through.

This kind of "crossing in front" of a dominant silverback (officially called a "displacement") may seem like a small act, but our expert gorilla trackers and researchers know that it is an important sign that leadership is being challenged. Another sign of Gicurasi's growing



Life with Pablo Gorillas: Episode Two

dominance desires was his ability to gain sexual attention from several females in the group around this same time.

By 2016, Gicurasi was already leading much of the group's protection and mating activities, though he did this without "official" recognition from all the group members. And the number of displacements by Gicurasi increased, even though Cantsbee was sometimes still able to show strong opposition when they ended up fighting physically. Now, as the number-one silverback,

Gicurasi allows him to show off to the females, and his favorites so far are young Shishikara and Umwari. They seem to like him too!

Number four silverback is another son of Cantsbee, 12-year-old Agahebuza who is just maturing from his adolescent stage. He seems well aware that there are three silverbacks above him and that he needs to respect them. A few months ago he made some challenges to Ubwuzu but lost, mainly because Ubwuzu has a better relationship with number one, Gicurasi. Now

and most of those occurred due to a unique trigger (such as death of a silverback), rather than due to old age. So the Cantsbee hierarchy change was special to observe.

And now, with all the males in Pablo group, we have an incredible opportunity to study all kinds of additional details about male hierarchy, including individual variability, resilience in the face of change, and various strategies for success.

"Being able to observe the gorillas for many hours every day gives us the opportunity to accurately

document dominance hierarchy, because it allows us to detect rare behaviors and reactions that last just a few seconds," says Vecellio.

"Most of the time, the males actually keep a peaceful tolerance and



From left, **Ubwuzu, Agahebuza, and Imfura.** Ubwuzu, at 13 years old, serves as the number three silverback, while Agahebuza, at 12, ranks number four. Imfura, at 10, is still too young for a position in the hierarchy, but is beginning to become popular with some of the females!

Gicurasi is a strong and undisputed leader, in his prime at age 23.

Numbers two, three and four

The current number two silverback in the group is 15-year-old Dushishoze, also a son of Cantsbee. He has the trust of Gicurasi and plays an important role as a sentry for detecting outside dangers, and being second in charge when facing an intrusion. Yet, he spends time on the periphery of the group and is always last when the group is moving, which is not unusual for the number-two silverback. He also doesn't get much access to the females.

Number three silverback is 13-year-old Ubwuzu, a grandson of Cantsbee, who is less shy with the females and a very active subordinate. His good relationship with

Agahebuza is calmer and knows to accept his lower rank.

We are also watching the maturation of three younger males, blackbacks ranging in age from 8 to 12 years old. They are too young to be in the running for a position in the leadership hierarchy so far, but they are becoming sexually mature. One of these – Imfura – has grown a lot recently and some of the females are showing interest in him. But this may be temporary so we are watching closely to see what these three young males do, as they shift from playing sessions to flirting to displays of power!

Learning all the time

Even though we have been observing mountain gorilla groups for more than 50 years, we have only witnessed a few examples of dominance shifts between silverbacks,

a certain distance between themselves, so it would be hard to see that something is going on if you just observe them for short time!"

Of course, male gorillas are not the only ones who establish hierarchies within a group. Adult females do this too, among themselves within a group. On very rare occasions, we have also seen an adult female take over leadership of a group, but only for short periods of time, when the dominant silverback had died and there were no other adult males to take over.

Stay tuned for Episode Three of "Life with Pablo Gorillas" in the next edition of Gorilla Journal, to learn about the important females in the group and what their various roles, activities, and challenges are.

Episode One of "Life with Pablo Gorillas," is now online at gorillafund.org/pablo. ■

Help ensure ongoing protection

Adopt a gorilla and learn the inside stories of their lives

For almost 20 years, the Fossey Fund has had a symbolic gorilla adoption program, which allows supporters to help fund our daily gorilla protection activities, while also offering a way to learn more and follow some of the individual gorillas we monitor every day in the wild.

And that's why our adoption program is so special — the gorillas we offer for adoption live in the wild, ranging across a wide variety of terrain in the Virunga mountains of Africa.

It is only through our vigilant daily protection and monitoring that we know so much about each individual gorilla.

Each year we feature several gorillas for adoption, including infants, mother-and-infant pairs, silverbacks, and even selected historic gorillas.

Adopters receive detailed profiles on the gorillas, photographs and other materials, providing details about each gorilla's life, history, and activities.

And each one has a unique and interesting story.

Icyororo: A resilient infant

For example, one of the gorillas available for adoption a few years



Icyororo has an incredible life story, even at her young age.

ago was infant Icyororo, who was only about 3 years old at the time and was about to lead a very challenging and interesting life.

In 2017, Icyororo's mother transferred out of her group, leaving her young daughter behind before she was fully independent.

Luckily, the silverback in the group, named Kubaha, helped to care for Icyororo as well as three other youngsters whose mothers also left the group, sharing his

night nest with them and providing protection.

And then, later that year, Icyororo and the other "orphans" faced additional challenges, when three of them got separated from their group, during an interaction with another group.

They traveled on their own for several weeks before finding their group again.

Our trackers followed them every day, allowing us to chronicle their



Gorilla Adoptions



Pasika, left, is an amazing mother and traveled for months on her own to protect her latest infant.

Below, she is shown with her first infant, Umutuzo. They were in our Adopt program in 2003.

resilience and progress.

Now, at 6 years old, Icyororo is showing increased independence, while still helping to support the other youngsters in their group.

Pasika and Umutuzo: 15 years later

Pasika and her first infant, Umutuzo, were among the adoptable gorillas we offered in 2003.

Mother Pasika was only about 12 years old then and Umutuzo was 2 years old. Pasika had already left her natal group several years earlier, and then continued to change groups a number of times after her second offspring was born.

More recently, she even traveled on her own with her infant for seven months, after her group dispersed in 2017 when the dominant silverback died. She then joined silverback Mafunzo, who leads a growing group.

Daughter Umutuzo left her mother and group in 2010 at age 9, and now lives outside our tracking area, over the border in Congo, according to results from the latest mountain gorilla census.

Every story is unique

These are the kinds of stories that our adopters get to follow. Every gorilla is unique and we are the only organization that has this kind of detail on individual gorillas in the wild.



“Our expert gorilla trackers and researchers know these gorillas so well, following them every day no matter how far they range – often in harsh weather and steep mountains – and collecting information on all of their activities,” says Fossey Fund Gorilla Program Manager Jean Paul Hirwa. “We are happy that we can share this information with those who want to support this important work by becoming a gorilla adopter.”

A great time to adopt

Please visit gorillafund.org/adopt to learn more and to adopt for yourself or for a loved one this holiday season.

“Gorilla adoptions make the most incredibly unique holiday gift,” says one adopter, who often adopts gorillas for friends, family, colleagues and business clients. “They touch people’s hearts in such a different way,” she says. ■

Mountain gorillas are endangered, but YOU can help save them.

When you symbolically adopt a gorilla, you protect one of the planet’s most endangered animals.

Please visit gorillafund.org/adopt to adopt a gorilla today!

We cannot reverse extinction, but we can prevent it.



Helping People. Saving Gorillas.



Mushroom farming is one of the newest successful school nature club projects we support in Rwanda, also geared toward improving food security.

Programs

continued from page 2

Helping communities

We have now put in place strategic plans for our community work in both Rwanda and Congo. We have also increased our food security efforts in Congo, where people have traditionally relied on hunting for food. This includes family farms programs, supporting fish farms and working with seedling

and tree nurseries to supply local household gardens, plus establishing new gardens and nature clubs at local schools. School gardens have proven extremely successful in our Rwanda programs, where they provide significant amounts of food for local people.

“Project like these can have a huge impact, both for the communities and for conservation,” says Sarah Tolbert, the Fossey Fund’s community engagement manager. ■

Grauer’s group

continued from page 3

other wildlife.

The Fossey Fund established the Nkuba Research and Conservation station in 2012 and our work has successfully reduced gorilla poaching in the area to undetectable levels, with local people — some were former hunters — now serv-

ing as skilled gorilla trackers, team leaders, and research assistants.

The Fossey Fund is the only nonprofit conservation organization with a permanent field site in this area.

“We inherited these forests from our ancestors and must protect them for the future,” says a former hunter, now a tracker protecting Grauer’s gorillas in Congo. ■

Building your own legacy of conservation

Planned giving is a unique way to support the work of the Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund during your lifetime and beyond.

When you inform us of your planned giving intentions, you become a member of our Legacy Society, allowing us to recognize you appropriately for your generosity and dedication to wild gorilla conservation in Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

There are many vehicles that allow you to provide for your loved ones and make a planned gift to the Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund, including:

- wills and living trusts,
- life insurance policies,
- retirement plan required distributions,
- bank and investment accounts,
- gifts of stock or securities, and
- donor-advised funds.

To learn more, please contact **Katherine Cadwallader** at kcadwallader@gorillafund.org; 404.624.5620. Or visit gorillafund.org/giving.

Thank you to our Collaborating Funders for their extraordinary support in 2018

The Milton and Tamar Maltz Family Foundation

Anonymous Foundation

ORACLE®

Orange County Community Foundation

TURNER FOUNDATION INC.



Follow us @savinggorillas